

LESSON 5

STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT

THE POET SINGS



VOCALESSENCE
WITNESS

LEARNING GOALS:

- Research the life and creative work of a Black poet, musician, writer, or storyteller.
- Identify experiences, communities, and historical or cultural contexts that influenced the storyteller's work
- Explore how storytellers use poetry, music, writing, and performance to communicate ideas and experiences
- Summarize and organize information from research sources
- Share their learning through a presentation that communicates why the storyteller and their work are meaningful

MATERIALS:

- List of suggested storytellers
- Teacher-approved sources, books, articles, or websites
- Presentation software if creating a digital presentation
- Paper or posterboard if creating a physical presentation

OBJECTIVE

Students will research a Black poet, musician, writer, or storyteller to learn about their life, experiences, and creative work, and will share their learning through a presentation that highlights the connection between a storyteller's life and the stories, ideas, and messages they communicate.

PROCESS

1: Extend the Learning - Student Research Project

Expand students' understanding of the long tradition of Black storytelling and introduce additional artists they may want to explore. Encourage them to research some of the local MN artists below!

Explain that Nur-D is one example of a Black storyteller who uses music, poetry, rhythm, and performance to communicate ideas and tell stories. *There are many other poets, musicians, writers, and spoken-word artists whose work has helped people share experiences, challenge ideas, celebrate their communities, and create change.*

Divide students into small groups or allow students to work individually.

Poets & Spoken Word Artists

Juanita Petris (local MN artist)
Tish Jones (local MN artist)
PaviElle French (local MN artist)
Tiyo Siyolo (local MN artist)
Maya Angelou
Gwendolyn Brooks
Nikki Giovanni
Amanda Gorman
Langston Hughes
Claude McKay
Phyllis Wheatley
Sarah Kay
Javon Johnson
Mahogany L. Browne

Writers

James Baldwin
Zora Neale Huston
Toni Morrison
Jacqueline Woodson

Musicians/Lyricists

Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson (local MN artist)
Maya Marchelle (local MN artist)
Jackson Hurst (local MN artist)
BdotCroc (local MN artist)
DJ Marcelle (local MN artist)
Nina Simone
Marvin Gaye
Stevie Wonder
Lauryn Hill

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VOCAL ESSENCE
WITNESS

Choose a Storyteller

Students research one person and create a short presentation.

The format can be adapted to the age group: (Research paper, short written report, poster, pictograph, digital presentation, short oral presentation).

Research Questions

Students should answer:

- Where and when were they born?
- What do we know about their childhood or community?
- What kind of stories or ideas do they share?
- How are they connected to poetry?
- What can we learn from their work?
- What is one thing you want your classmates to know?

2: Create the Presentation

Students organize their research into their chosen format. Their presentation should help classmates understand **who this person is/was, what shaped them, and why their work matters**. Students should include at least one example of the storyteller's work when appropriate.

3: Share the Learning

Students present their storytellers to the class. As the classmates listen, encourage them to look for connections between storytellers.

After the presentations, discuss:

- What did these storytellers have in common?
- What themes or ideas appeared across multiple storytellers?
- Did any storyteller face challenges?
- How did those experiences influence their work?

MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

MUSIC: Responding

Standard 7: Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work. Students analyze a storyteller's creative work and identify the ideas, experiences, and messages communicated through poetry, music, writing, or performance.

MUSIC: Connecting

Standard 9: Integrate knowledge and personal experiences while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work. Students connect their research about a storyteller's life and experiences to their understanding of the artist's creative work.

MUSIC: Connecting

Standard 10: Demonstrate an understanding that artistic works influence and are influenced by personal, societal, cultural, and historical contexts. Students are looking at how a storyteller's community, experiences, history, and culture influence their artistic work.

WRITING

Standard 7: Engage in inquiry-based learning and research processes to create texts and presentations for a variety of purposes.